

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests and Range

LHEIDLI T'ENNEH SECURES ACCESS TO BEETLE WOOD

PRINCE GEORGE – The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation will receive \$914,000 and access to more than 1.2 million cubic metres of timber through a five-year agreement reached with the Province, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today while helping open the First Nations' Mountain Pine Beetle Office in Shelley.

"First Nations are important partners in our ongoing effort to salvage as much economic value as possible from beetle-attacked wood," said Coleman. "This agreement not only supports that partnership, it gives the Lheidli T'enneh a foundation to create new jobs and new opportunities for band members."

Timber harvested under the agreement will come from the Prince George Timber Supply Area. The new volume will help expand the Lheidli T'enneh's existing operations under LTN Logging – a joint venture with Roga Contracting Ltd. that employs about 30 people.

"Our community's long-term goal is economic stability so our children, and our children's children, will have a better way of life," said Lheidli T'enneh Chief Dominic Frederick. "The revenue and timber provided in this agreement will help open new doors for our people by strengthening our foothold in the forest industry."

The Lheidli T'enneh will receive an immediate payment of \$304,750 in recognition of the band's advanced progress in Stage 5 treaty negotiations with the Province. The remaining revenue will be paid over the next five years in \$152,000 annual installments.

"A major goal of these agreements is to make First Nations full partners in British Columbia's forest sector," said Prince George-Mount Robson MLA Shirley Bond. "They're also a concrete expression of our New Relationship with First Nations – a relationship based on recognition, reconciliation and respect."

In addition to the five-year agreement, the Lheidli T'enneh are pursuing a community forest pilot agreement offered by the Province in 2003. Work is underway to identify the tenure's operating area.

"The economic development opportunities that flow from these forestry agreements are examples of what's possible when we work together," said Prince George-Omineca MLA John Rustad. "This relationship is particularly important now, as we face the challenges of the mountain pine beetle infestation together."

The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation has approximately 320 members. About 120 people live on the band's reserve in Shelley, 30 minutes northeast of Prince George.

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"Co-operation builds economic certainty, not only for First Nations, but the broader community, as we seek new investment in our province," said Prince George North MLA Pat Bell. "I wish the Lheidli T'enneh every success in their new ventures."

Since 2002, the Province has signed agreements with 116 First Nations, providing access to 22 million cubic metres of timber and more than \$153.2 million in shared revenue.

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